



By Robert Saydlowski Jr.

What do Peter Criss, Louis Bellson and Ed Shaughnessy have in common? Fame and fortune, you say? Well, you're partially right, but they also have Pearl Drums. Until recently, everyone has joked about products being "Made In Japan". Lately, though, it seems that the Japanese are coming out with some damn good stuff! Pearl Drums, distributed in the U.S. by Norlin, are one example of their current craftsmanship.

Hence an actual "road test" and product review as the drums to be mentioned were used "on the road" for the past year.

Pearl currently makes four types of shells: wood, fiberglass-lined wood,

fiberglass, and transparent. The kit I've used is fiberglass-lined. One advantage to this type of shell is that you get the resonance of a wood shell combined with the volume and consistency of fiberglass. These shells (and the regular fiberglass) will not warp out of shape when subjected to varying degrees of humidity. Pearl also has a good variety of finishes ranging from pure glossy white to oyster pearl to gold satin to chrome. New to the line is their tinted transparent.

I've found that the bass drum spurs just can't be beat. They can lock in at any angle and height, and the drum can be played for hours without it ever moving. Their bass drum pedal has



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built-in spurs to further prevent the drum from creeping away. The same goes for their tomtom holders. Using something akin to a ball-bearing system, the mounted toms can be placed at virtually any angle you want. Each tom is supported on its own arm and the hexagonal design prevents any twisting or sinking of the drum. All Pearl cymbal stands and tomtom stands are fitted with nylon bushings so they won't slip and the cymbal tilters are adjustable to a full 90°. One problem I've found, though, is that the bases of the cymbal stands would stick after a while and wouldn't fold out to their widest stance. Pearl has a cheaper line of stands and pedals for the beginning or student drummer, but all of their professional stands and pedals are heavy-duty. They even have their own lines of cymbals, gongs and conga drums.

Pearl makes their snare drums with brass shells, steel shells, and transparent shells. The brass shell seems to cut through the band very well, but the strainer I had was, at times,

loosening. Pearl also has a full line of concert (single-headed) toms ranging from 6" diameter to 16" diameter. I used their set of four high-pitched fiberglass toms with the rest of the drum kit and found that the concert toms add a big opportunity for more percussive expression. And the projection of the concert toms is just incredible. The larger ones seem to have a lot of ring to them, but this problem can be reduced by putting taps or some sort of muffling material on the head.

Pearl has passed this Road Test with flying colors, but I do wish they would make a 14" x 26" bass drum (their largest now is 14" x 24") and an 18" x 20" floor tom (largest is 16" x 18"). But, Pearl has a reputation of listening to its customers and helping them out, so maybe in the near future, my wish will come true.

For catalogs and price lists, write to:

Pearl Drums
c/o Norlin Music, Inc.
7373 N. Cicero Avenue
Lincolnwood, Illinois 60468